Do You Respect Other People's Perspectives?

At times the world seems dominated by conflict and argument. We're often a collective of individuals squabbling over the right way to do things, the right way to act and the right things to believe. There are lots of perspectives, and they often disagree with each other.

We argue over the things we see in the news. We complain over the videos and articles we see posted on the internet. We're very good at forming our own opinions about what we prefer, but at times we're not that good at respecting the opinions of others.

At times it feels like we are trying to form some kind of global consensus on how to live life. However, the beauty of our experience is that we each get to determine what is valid and important in our *own* lives. We each get to choose our own path. We each get to determine the best course for ourselves.

It is my opinion that life is much easier when we make the choice to live and let live. After all, our opinions are formed from our individual experiences, and no two of us has the same exact experiences.

We're all different...

We all live differently. We were all raised differently. We have differences in our race, our religion, our nationality, our family upbringing. We have different educations and different jobs.

I've had a unique set of life circumstances and so have you.

I am an American woman who identifies as white. My parents were both American, my mom coming from a German background and my dad from a Spanish one. I moved around a lot as a kid. My parents were very liberal and Catholic.

I went to a great college. I married a Jewish man. I had two kids, one boy and one girl.

This short list of factors have shaped a lot of my life experiences, and therefore they have shaped my perspectives.

How experiences shape perspective

A lot of who I am and what I stand for has roots in experiences I had many years ago.

For example, I don't like guns, and I don't much see the point in them. I didn't grow up with them, and my parents raised me with the belief that they were violent and unnecessary.

I'd never even shot a gun until a few months ago. My best friend wanted to go to the gun range for her birthday, so I went along, but I was very, very uncomfortable. It wasn't for me.

So, my preferred reality is one without guns. This preference started in my childhood, and it stuck. I don't see any point in changing my perspective at this point, because it works for me. I don't believe I need any means of protection, and I feel safe in the world as I am.

However, just because I don't like guns and I don't prefer to be around them, doesn't mean that people who promote gun ownership are wrong or bad. They just have a different perspective than I do, and that's ok.

After all, I might feel differently if I was raised by parents who weren't so liberal. I might feel differently if I was brought up shooting guns, or if I was raised in a violent community where I felt like I had to survive. I might feel differently if I lived in the country, or if hunting was a part of my upbringing.

My perspective, after all, is just my perspective. It isn't right or wrong, it's simply the perspective that is relevant to my experiences.

All subjects are fundamentally neutral

The truth of the matter is that all subjects are relative and fundamentally neutral. A gun could be viewed positively or negatively depending on who is looking at it. My viewpoint is largely negative on this subject, but for others it is quite positive, and that's ok.

We didn't come to this planet to agree on everything (and if we did, we're failing miserably at this task!). We came to have individual experiences, and this means we are going to have differences of opinion.

When we try to force other people to see things from our perspective, we make things much harder than we have to in life.

It's OK to disagree!

When we insist that others agree with us, we are shouting a very loud, and a very self-destructive message out into the universe:

"THERE IS NO FREEDOM OF CHOICE! THERE'S ONLY ONE RIGHT WAY FOR ME TO BE!"

Now, I don't know about you, but I like that I get to choose how to live my life. I also like that I have the option to change my mind whenever I want.

I don't like the idea that there is some sort of mold we are all supposed to fit into.

I don't want to feel as if other people get to decide what's valid in my life. I don't want to feel as if my perspective is irrelevant. I don't want anyone else to feel that way either.

So, I may not agree with your political preferences or how you raise your children. I might not like your hairstyle or the clothes you wear. However, I'm glad you have the ability to choose what works for you, because it means *I get to choose what works for me*.

Beyond that, I don't see the point in forcing my viewpoint on you, because I know that no matter how hard I try I can't see the world from your eyes. You best know how to define your own reality, because it's *your* reality. In all honesty, how you navigate your reality really isn't any of my business.

Arguing and debating over who is right, from my perspective, is a colossal waste of time. We're never going to agree on everything. We'll never see things from the exact same perspective (at least not in this lifetime!).

I may strongly dislike racism, sexism and homophobia, but if I force everyone to abandon their beliefs and agree with me, I'm no better than the racists, the sexists and the homophobes. I'm just another person who insists everyone thinks like me and acts like me. And I don't want to be that way.

True tolerance is accepting of all perspectives

Tolerance isn't a one-way street. You can't be tolerant of only one set of opinions. If you are, then you're not truly tolerant.

True tolerance is respecting everyone's right to be what they are, even (and especially!) when we don't agree with their choices. True tolerance includes accepting other people's choice to be intolerant.

My perspective

So I choose to be tolerant, even when it's not the popular choice. I choose to let people make their own choices, because I know I don't have the power to create in anyone else's experiences. I choose to be tolerant because it's only my job to create *my* reality. It's not my job to create yours.

There will be people who view me as one who puts my head in the sand, and I'm OK with that, because that is their perspective. There will be people who see me as ignorant, and that's OK, because that is their perspective.

From my perspective, I know you have your reasons for your beliefs and your actions. From my perspective, I don't want to force you to look at life the same way I do. From my perspective, I choose to look at you and know that you are doing the best you can from your place in the world.

You are in charge of your own thoughts and your own actions. Far be it from me to decide how *you* should live *your* life.

From my perspective, I prefer to live in a reality where I am allowed to make my own choices and a reality where I am accepted for who and what I am. Therefore from my perspective, it is important that I allow you to do the same, and find a reason to love you regardless of your opinions and choices.

I've come to find it's a lot easier to love other people when you cut them some slack for living their own lives and coming to their own conclusions. From my perspective, when I love you as you are, I make a choice to love myself as I am. In my book, you don't have to "fall in line" to be worthy of my love and acceptance, so neither do I.

True tolerance, in the end, allows you to be free in your very own mind. Free to do whatever you want. Free from letting other people's choices affect you negatively. Free from needing everyone to agree with the truth of *your r*eality.

That, at least, is my perspective.

by [Andrea Schulman](#) My name is [Andrea Schulman](#), I am a former high school psychology teacher and the creator of 'Raise Your Vibration Today.' I teach people about the Law of Attraction with fun, clarity and success! Check out my [member website](#) to learn how to create your reality with your thoughts.

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